

VA Maryland Health Care System

Psychology Externship Program

2022-2023 Training Year



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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to our Psychology Externship Program Training Brochure. We appreciate your interest and hope this brochure provides you with information that can assist you in making a well-informed decision regarding your future training. Thank you again for your interest!

Diversity Statement

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is committed to ensuring equal employment opportunity (EEO), promoting diversity and inclusion, and resolving workplace conflict constructively to maintain a high performing workforce in service to our Nation's Veterans. To that end, the Department will vigorously enforce all applicable Federal EEO laws, regulations, Executive Orders, and Management Directives to ensure equal opportunity in the workplace for all VA employees. For additional information, please consult the VA EEO Policy at <http://www.diversity.va.gov/policy/statement.aspx> or contact the VAMHCS EEO office.

Clinical Settings

VA Maryland Health Care System

The Veterans Affairs Maryland Health Care System (VAMHCS) is a dynamic and progressive health care organization dedicated to providing quality, compassionate and accessible care and service to Maryland's Veterans. The Baltimore and Perry Point VA Medical Centers, in addition to the Loch Raven VA Community Living & Rehabilitation Center and six community based outpatient clinics, all work together to form this comprehensive health care delivery system. Nationally recognized for its outstanding patient safety and state-of-the-art technology, the VAMHCS is proud of its reputation as a leader in Veterans' health care, research, and education.

Statistics for FY 2014 show that the VAMHCS recorded almost 600,000 separate outpatient encounters, with over 52,000 unique patients. The Baltimore VA Medical Center recorded almost 400,000 separate patient encounters with over 45,000 unique patients, and the Perry Point Medical Center recorded almost 100,000 and over 13,000 unique patients for the same time period. The sheer volume of patients treated across the variety of clinics ensures that externs are exposed to a diversity of patient demographics, encounter a spectrum of degrees of complexity in presenting mental health and medical problems, and experience a variety of patient problems with enough frequency to establish good baseline knowledge of a variety of psychological phenomena.

Baltimore VA Medical Center: The Baltimore VA Medical Center is located in a vibrant city neighborhood on the campus of the University of Maryland at Baltimore (UMB) and is within walking distance of Oriole Park at Camden Yards, M&T Bank Stadium, Lexington Market and the Inner Harbor. The Baltimore VA Medical Center is the acute medical and surgical care facility for the VAMHCS and offers a full range of inpatient, outpatient, and primary care services, as well as a number of specialized programs and services, including integrated mental health in primary care programs, a women Veterans evaluation and treatment program, medical psychology and treatment for chronic pain, inpatient and outpatient mental health care services, and an intensive outpatient substance abuse detoxification and treatment program. Three blocks from the medical center, the Baltimore Annex offers outpatient mental health programming in the following specialty areas: trauma recovery, neuropsychology, and psychosocial rehabilitation and recovery.

Perry Point VA Medical Center: The Perry Point VA Medical Center is located about 45 minutes north of Baltimore on a beautiful campus of approximately 400 acres on the banks of the Susquehanna River and the Chesapeake Bay. It provides a broad range of inpatient, outpatient, and primary care services and is a leader in

providing comprehensive mental health care to Maryland's Veterans. The medical center offers long and short-term inpatient and outpatient mental health care, including the following specialized treatment programs:

- Mental Health Intensive Case Management
- Psychosocial Rehabilitation and Recovery Center
- Health Improvement Program
- Family Intervention Team
- Outpatient Trauma & Post Traumatic Stress Disorder Program
- Substance Abuse Residential Rehabilitation Treatment
- Domiciliary Residential Rehabilitation Treatment (for Homeless Veterans)

Loch Raven Community Living & Rehabilitation Center: The Loch Raven VA Community Living and Rehabilitation Center (CLRC) specializes in providing rehabilitation and post-acute care for patients in the VAMHCS. The center coordinates the delivery of rehabilitation services, including physical therapy, occupational therapy, kinesiotherapy and recreation therapy, to achieve the highest level of recovery and independence for Maryland's Veterans. The center also provides hospice and nursing home care to Veterans requiring non-acute inpatient care, in addition to offering specialized treatment for patients with Alzheimer's disease and other forms of dementia. Please be aware there are no current training offerings at the Loch Raven CLRC, and this differs from the Loch Raven VA Outpatient Clinic training opportunity.

Community Based Outpatient Clinics (CBOCs): Each of our 6 CBOCs provide primary care and limited specialty medical care services. Every CBOC offers Primary Care-Mental Health Integration (PC-MHI), telemental health services, as well as specialty mental health services. Some of the larger CBOCs provide PTSD and Substance Use Disorder services.

- Cambridge VA Outpatient Clinic
- Fort Meade VA Outpatient Clinic
- Glen Burnie VA Outpatient Clinic
- Loch Raven VA Outpatient Clinic
- Pocomoke City VA Outpatient Clinic

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Training Model and Program Philosophy

The VAMHCS Psychology Externship Program aspires to the scientist-practitioner approach to training. This is considered an aspirational goal given the primary emphasis on clinical training during this externship placement. Although research training is not part of these placements, our Program strives to incorporate evidence-based practice for the psychological treatment of mental illness and other conditions for the effective care of patients. Our externs actively engage in clinical service that supports their ability to, as clinically indicated: 1.) identify and clearly describe the disorders and conditions presented by patients, 2.) select or create reliable and valid outcome measures that are sensitive to changes in patients' disorders or conditions, and 3.) identify and successfully administer treatments to improve these disorders or conditions.

The Program is particularly interested in applicants from graduate programs that place an equally strong emphasis on scientific study and broad clinical training. It is expected that applicants have solid foundational training and skills across a range of clinical populations, evidence-based practices, and with objective psychological assessments.

While adhering to a scientist-practitioner approach to training that underscores evidence-based practice, the Program aims to train and refine skills in core competency domains with the ultimate goal of facilitating the

development of externs by advancing their training and preparing them for internship. As an illustration, specific training in assessment or treatment for a particular presenting problem will be grounded in research, clinical practice guidelines, and expert consensus on that problem. To round out existing scientific and clinical skills, extensive efforts are made to tailor the externship training experience to each individual extern's needs and allow a reasonable amount of focused specialization in each extern's area of emphasis.

Role of the Staff

Program staff and supervisors are held to the highest levels of professional and ethical conduct. They are expected to both model these behaviors and promote extern engagement in the following: 1.) ethical and responsible clinical and scientific conduct, 2.) participation in self-regulatory and professional review activities, 3.) commitment to continued professional self-development through participation in training and educational activities, and 4.) activities promoting professional autonomy, such as active involvement with local, state, and national organizations, legislative efforts, and licensure activities.

Role of the Extern

Program externs are expected to assume the role of professional psychologist within their training assignments. This role requires awareness of and adherence to the highest principles of professional ethics, conduct, and competence, as well as a sincere interest in the welfare of clients. Externs have the opportunity to learn new clinical skills and techniques from their supervisors and other staff, as well as the opportunity to improve and modify existing skills. The majority of an extern's time is focused on development and expansion of clinical competencies. Though externs are expected to conduct themselves professionally, their tasks are primarily learning-oriented. Although there is some variability across training sites, clinical service delivery is considered incidental to the learning process. Externs are not expected to assume the same quantity of duties, workload, or responsibilities normally assigned to the professional psychology staff.

Externs are expected to be involved in their clinical training assignments to the benefit of the VAMHCS health care delivery systems and their own learning experiences. Externs are expected to adhere to the ethical guidelines established for psychologists by the American Psychological Association and to the policies and procedures of their host institution and clinics.

Clinical Supervision and Support

Externs receive a minimum of two hours per week of supervision, at least one hour of which is individual, face-to-face supervision with a licensed psychologist. Supervisors are readily available to respond to externs' questions and provide impromptu guidance. When an extern's primary supervisor is on leave, back-up coverage is clearly delineated. At the beginning of training, the supervisor and extern jointly assess the extern's training needs and establish individualized training goals.

Staff psychologists with appropriate clinical privileges provide primary supervision to externs. Credentialed clinicians from allied professions and non-staff psychology consultants provide supplemental training expertise. There are opportunities for additional supervisory consultation with psychologists working outside the extern's normal assignment area as well. Program faculty use various modes and models of supervision in the training of externs, including co-therapy, analysis of audiotaped or videotaped sessions, supervisor "shadowing," and "junior colleague." In all cases, externs work closely with supervisors initially, and then gradually function more independently as their skills develop. Responsibility for ensuring adequacy of supervision rests with the Program Training Committee, under the leadership of the Psychology Training Program Director.

Training Term

The externship training year is for a term of 9 to 12-months beginning in early Summer or Fall. Externs typically work two days a week, with most externs working an average of 16 - 20 hours per week. This length is consistent with the majority of other psychology externships in the United States and allows externs to compete competitively for internship placements. However, the exact nature of the training term and requirements will vary based on the placement. The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has certainly altered the training landscape and clinical practice within the VAMHCS, to primarily include telehealth and telesupervision activities.

COVID-19 Impact on Training

The current 2021-2022 training year has given various insights that can help inform the potential impact of the ongoing pandemic on externship training. Recruitment and interviews will be conducted virtually using video and/or telephone platforms, such as Webex, Microsoft Teams, or Zoom. The exact nature of clinical activities and practice will vary depending on the placement and should be clarified with your potential supervisors upon interviewing with them. Please be aware that changes can occur abruptly at times, and flexibility and ability to adapt to changes are highly valued qualities within our system.

We hope to be able to offer both face-to-face and virtual clinical experiences for this coming training year, but the exact timing and nature of what this may involve is hard to predict at this time. For any face-to-face clinical work conducted during the pandemic, personal protective equipment (PPE) and social distancing procedures will be required when working on-site. Additional clinic-specific safety precautions may also be implemented as needed to ensure the safety of trainees, staff, and our clients. For virtual clinical training experiences, this will be conducted virtually through VA-approved video or telephone platforms (e.g., VA Video Connect). In some instances, externs may be able to utilize equipment on-site at the VA based on the availability and suitability of your placement for on-site work. In all other instances, externs will be required to utilize personal equipment from the extern's home for these clinical activities such as a desktop or laptop computer, camera, headphones or speakers, microphone and a reliable internet connection. Externs will also be expected to have and maintain a suitable work environment for maintaining confidentiality, professionalism, and collaboration through safe working conditions.

Based on the current training year, externs and their supervisors will also be required to submit a formal training proposal to the VAMHCS Education Department outlining any specific safety precautions, adaptations to training, and the nature of the clinical practice being conducted. These training proposals will be reviewed by our Education Department and approval will be required prior to beginning clinical activities.

There are also various considerations for our training program with respect to vaccinations. First, all staff and trainees will be required to obtain the influenza vaccination (i.e., a flu shot) as a condition of their employment/appointment. Various exemptions exist, such as obtaining medical documentation of a medical exemption or an exemption due to religious reasons. Documentation of the vaccination and/or exemption will be required to maintain employment/appointment. Second, all staff and trainees are required to obtain the COVID-19 vaccination as part of their appointment. The same exemptions described above for the influenza vaccination apply for exemptions related to the COVID-19 vaccination.

CLINICAL PLACEMENTS

Training Placement Overview

Training Placement	Location	Spots Available
Neuropsychology	Baltimore	4
Outpatient Mental Health Clinic	Baltimore	3
Outpatient Mental Health Clinic	Perry Point	1
Primary Care-Mental Health Integration	Perry Point	1
Psychosocial Rehabilitation and Recovery Center (PRRC)	Perry Point	1
Psychosocial Residential Rehabilitation Treatment Program (PR RTP)	Perry Point	1

Neuropsychology – Baltimore VA Annex

The Neuropsychology Program adheres to training criteria and guidelines developed by Division 40 of the American Psychological Association, the Association of Externship Training in Clinical Neuropsychology, and the Houston Conference on Specialty Education and Training in Clinical Neuropsychology. Veterans with medical, neurological, and psychiatric disorders are referred from various clinics and units throughout the VA Maryland Health Care System for neuropsychological assessment. Diagnoses include neurodegenerative, neuropsychiatric, endocrine, infectious, seizure, and vascular disorders, as well as tumor and head trauma. We also see patients referred for war-related injuries and associated symptoms. Patients include individuals from different racial/ethnic backgrounds, gender identities, and ages: a substantial number of patients are over 50, although we routinely see referrals as young as 22. Externs conduct assessments in the general outpatient clinic in the Baltimore Annex and may also have the opportunity to work in the fast-paced interdisciplinary Geriatric Assessment Clinic at the main Baltimore facility on Greene Street or the Loch Raven Outpatient Clinic, collaborating with medicine, pharmacy, and social work to diagnose neurocognitive disorders and provide feedback to older Veterans and their families. The Neuropsychology externship is structured for externs who have already completed at least one neuropsychology practicum.

Adaptations for COVID-19: While we anticipate a combination of virtual and face-to-face testing, this domain is difficult to predict for the 2022-23 cycle. At the time of writing, most testing and clinical interviews involving externs are conducted in person at VA facilities. A minority are provided virtually, i.e., video platform such as VA Video Connect [<https://mobile.va.gov/app/va-video-connect>] or WebEx, or occasionally by telephone; this smaller group of assessments is performed either from VA offices or from the extern's approved alternate workstation at home. Prior experience with tele-assessment (especially tele-neuropsychology) is an asset though not required, and flexibility is highly valued. The VA does NOT provide tele-neuropsychology equipment to externs for home use. If intending to complete a tele-assessment from home rather than a VA office, externs must therefore use personal equipment: desktop or laptop, camera, headphones or earbuds, microphone, and reliable internet connection are required. Please note that tele-neuropsychology requires enough screen space to keep stimuli, record forms, and the patient's image in view simultaneously.

Dr. Jeremy Carmasin earned a Ph.D. in clinical psychology from the University of Louisville, with research and clinical foci in geropsychology and neuropsychology. He completed his neuropsychology-focused internship at the Western New York VAMC, and his postdoctoral fellowship in clinical neuropsychology at Dartmouth College / Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center. His research interests include longitudinal assessment of memory and executive functions (particularly in clinically-normal and mild neurocognitive disorder populations), and subjective measures of cognitive change and successful aging. Along with other Neuropsychology Section staff, Dr. Carmasin supervises externs, interns, and postdoctoral fellows.

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Outpatient Mental Health Clinic – Baltimore VA Medical Center

The Mental Health Clinic (MHC) is a multidisciplinary program that provides outpatient medical, psychiatric, and social work services. Veterans receive treatment for a variety of

conditions including Anxiety Disorders, PTSD, Bipolar Disorder, and Depressive Disorders. Veterans who are eligible to receive psychology services through MHC can receive appropriate psychotherapeutic interventions to improve and maximize their quality of life and recovery process.

The main training goal of the MHC externship is to prepare externs to learn appropriate interventions in order to treat individuals with the broad range of psychological disorders typically encountered in a multi-disciplinary outpatient mental health clinic. MHC externs will have the opportunity to provide individual therapy using Cognitive Behavioral, Acceptance and Commitment Therapy, Interpersonal Therapy, and other evidence-based treatments. There is also an opportunity for group therapy depending on space and availability. Externs also have the opportunity to develop their knowledge and application of several evidence-based psychotherapies, including Cognitive Behavior Therapy (CBT), Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT), and Interpersonal Therapy (IPT). Measurement-based treatment is emphasized, and externs are encouraged to incorporate assessment measures – such as the Beck Depression Inventory – II (BDI-II), Beck Anxiety Inventory (BAI), Patient Health Questionnaire (PHQ-9), and PTSD Checklist for DSM-5 (PCL-5) –to evaluate treatment progress. The externship is a 10-16 hour a week position. **Due to space constraints, externs must be available on Fridays. The additional day is negotiable.**

Please be aware one position will be available with Dr. De Marco, and up to two positions will be available with Dr. Wanhatalo.

Dr. Joseph De Marco is a staff psychologist in the Mental Health Clinic. He earned his Psy.D. at Loyola University Maryland. He completed his pre-doctoral internship at the Coatesville VA Medical Center in Coatesville, PA and his fellowship at the Trauma Services Program at the Edward Hines Jr. VA Hospital in Hines, IL. Dr. De Marco provides both individual and group psychotherapy primarily utilizing Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) and Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT). He has received extensive training in evidence-based practices (EBPs) for PTSD including Cognitive Processing Therapy (CPT) for PTSD and Prolonged Exposure (PE) for PTSD. He is also trained in Imagery Rehearsal Therapy (IRT) for nightmares and Motivational Interviewing (MI). Dr. De Marco's clinical interests include trauma, exposure therapy, health psychology, mindfulness, diversity/multiculturalism, and supervision. He enjoys providing clinical supervision to externs and is excited to be part of VAMHCS psychology training program.

Dr. Candice Wanhatalo is a staff psychologist and BHIP team lead in the Mental Health Clinic. Dr. Wanhatalo is also a current member of the Internship Training Committee, serving as the Coordinator of Diversity and Inclusion Training. Prior to joining VAMHCS in April of 2018, she was a staff psychologist in the Mental Health Clinic at the Washington DCVAMC for ten years. During her ten years in DC, Dr. Wanhatalo was an active member of the training committee, served as supervisor to externs, interns and postdoctoral fellows. Her clinical interests include depressive disorders, Whole Health, mindfulness, and anger management. She has completed additional training in evidence-based approaches such as CBT for Depression, CBT for Psychosis, and Interpersonal Therapy for Depression. She received her B.A. from the Pennsylvania State University (We Are!) and received her Ph.D. in Clinical Psychology from George Mason University. She completed her internship in community mental health at the Fairfax-Falls Church Community Services Board in Fairfax County, Virginia, where she served

as mental health therapist for two years. Dr. Wanhatalo greatly enjoys working with externs, and has been thrilled to see how her former trainees have progressed in their careers over time.

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Outpatient Mental Health Clinic – Perry Point VA Medical Center

Patient Population

The Perry Point VA Medical Center Outpatient Mental Health Clinic is a freestanding, two story building situated on an approximately 400-acre campus located on the banks of the Susquehanna River and the Chesapeake Bay. The mental health clinic serves approximately 4,000 Veterans in a given year, the majority of whom receive medication management. The age of Veterans treated ranges from the early 20's to the late 80's with an average age in the mid 40's. Veterans receive treatment for a variety of mental health conditions including major depression, anxiety disorders (i.e., PTSD), interpersonal relationship difficulties, bipolar disorder, and Substance Use Disorders, including dual diagnosis. A portion of these Veterans may also present with characterological issues.

Assessment, Treatment and Supervision

Training in this rotation will focus on competency as a generalist in an outpatient practice. Core skills will include assessment utilizing structured diagnostic interviews, bio-data, and objective psychological tests; individual psychotherapy; group psychotherapy; and group psychoeducation. Services are provided both in person and via tele-mental health. The extern will carry a clinical caseload of 5-7 Veterans for individual psychotherapy and be involved in co-leading or leading two psychotherapy or psychoeducation groups. Ideally this will include following several cases from intake to resolution, including assessment, case formulation and a course of time-limited evidence-based psychotherapy.

Psychotherapy training will emphasize evidence-based techniques that have broad application across multiple diagnoses. Treatment modalities include Cognitive-Behavioral therapy (CBT), Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT), and Existential-Humanistic Therapy. Externs interested in obtaining more experience treating Veterans with PTSD may (depending on availability) have the opportunity to provide individual assessment and therapy to Veterans with symptoms of PTSD, including evidence-based trauma therapies, such as Prolonged Exposure (PE), Cognitive Processing Therapy (CPT), and Exposure, Relaxation, and Re-scripting Therapy (ERRT) for nightmares.

Externs will have the opportunity to conduct brief psychosocial assessments, allowing the opportunity to integrate data from an unstructured interview, chart review, and brief symptom assessment measures to assist in initial case formulation for treatment and consultation to other mental health disciplines. In addition, the extern will have the opportunity to complete integrated psychological assessments (depending on availability). Primary psychological instruments used will include brief structured interviews (e.g., SCID, MINI, and CAPS), objective psychometric measures (i.e., PAI and MMPI-2) and symptom validity measures (e.g., BDI-2, BAI, PCL-5, OQ-45). Assessment referral questions typically address differential diagnosis for treatment planning.

Externs will have two individual, hour-long supervision sessions per week to discuss assessment cases, case conceptualizations, documentation, and individual psychotherapy cases. Additionally, externs will have the opportunity to discuss treatment modalities and to ask questions about professional development during supervision. The extern is always welcome to pop in with questions and/or concerns between supervision sessions. The general approach to supervision is a developmental-collaborative style, with the goal of supervision to ensure that the extern is getting a comprehensive training experience.

Dr. Ashley Greer completed his Ph.D. at Fielding University and his pre-doctoral internship at the Devereux Foundation in Pennsylvania. He is a staff psychologist in the Perry Point Outpatient Mental Health Clinic and provides both individual and group therapy from an existential-humanistic perspective for a wide range of psychiatric disorders. He is trained in Cognitive Behavioral Therapy and Acceptance and Commitment Therapy. He utilizes evidence-based practices including Cognitive Processing Therapy (CPT) for PTSD, Prolonged Exposure (PE) for PTSD, Motivational Interviewing (MI), Exposure Relaxation and Re-scripting Treatment (ERRT) for nightmares, Seeking Safety, Cognitive Behavioral Therapy for Insomnia, Mindfulness Based Stress Reduction, Act for Behavioral Addictions, and Social Skills Training. In addition, he leads weekly groups in Motivational Enhancement Therapy for Substance Use disorders and Conflict Resolution, provides counseling to employees through the Employee Assistance Program and has specialty experience in Suboxone treatment for Opiate Use Disorders. He is interested in utilizing Complementary and Integrative Health strategies from a holistic perspective to promote mental wellness.

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Primary Care-Mental Health Integration – Perry Point VA Medical Center

An externship within Primary Care-Mental Health Integration at Perry Point VAMC allows externs to obtain clinical experiences in colocated collaborative care within a primary care setting. Externs will have the opportunity to develop skills in brief functional assessments, brief psychotherapy and making appropriate referrals to specialty mental health care. The majority of referrals are same-day “warm handoffs” from a primary care provider or member of the primary care team. Common referrals are depression, anxiety, sleep difficulties/insomnia, smoking cessation, chronic pain, stress management and coping with chronic illness. Externs will learn how to complete a functional assessment within 30 minutes and conduct brief, time-limited psychotherapy with the patient for 4-6 sessions, if the patient is an appropriate candidate for PC-MHI treatment. Motivational interviewing, cognitive behavioral therapy and mindfulness based approaches are utilized. Externs MAY also have the opportunity to co-lead a CBT for chronic pain group (Thursdays) as well as participate in mental health pre-transplant evaluations.

There is one slot available for this externship placement. This externship placement is for 8-16 hours per week for 9-12 months. Days are flexible; however, Thursdays are a preferred day.

Melisa Schneider, Psy.D. Dr. Schneider earned her doctorate in clinical psychology from La Salle University with a health psychology concentration. She completed her internship at the Miami VA Medical Center, with training in the psychological assessment and treatment of various geriatric and medical patient populations, including cancer, medical inpatient

consultation and liaison, hospice/palliative care, chronic pain, and transplant. She then completed a one-year postdoctoral fellowship at Salem VA Medical Center, with a focus on primary care-mental health integration and behavioral medicine. Dr. Schneider is the PC-MHI coordinator with VAMHCS as well as a fellowship coordinator for the Clinical Psychology Fellowship in PC-MHI. Dr. Schneider's career experiences have focused on collocated collaborative care, chronic disease management, coping with chronic illness, health behavior changes, and chronic pain management.

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Psychosocial Rehabilitation and Recovery Center (PRRC) – Perry Point VA Medical Center

Patient Population

The Psychosocial Rehabilitation and Recovery Center (PRRC) is an intensive outpatient treatment program designed to support recovery and integration into meaningful self-determined community roles for Veterans challenged with Severe Mental Illness (SMI). Veterans referred to the PRRC need additional support, education, psychotherapy, and care coordination to manage in the community and improve success reaching individualized recovery goals. Services within the PRRC are curriculum-based and specifically designed to teach the requisite skills that are necessary for defining and realizing the Veteran's self-chosen goals in all domains of health. Length of participation in the program is determined on an individual basis according to each veteran's treatment needs and recovery goals. Veterans participate in an intensive treatment program that includes daily individual psychotherapy/recovery coaching, group-based psychotherapy, group-based psychoeducation/coping skills training and community reintegration activities. The hours of operation range from 7:30am to 4:30pm Monday through Friday, with some evening access to individual sessions as needed at each site. Due to COVID-19 safety precautions, many services are provided via telehealth utilizing several virtual video platforms. However, a small portion of services are now being provided on-site at Perry Point VAMC and within the community. PRRC services are delivered through an interdisciplinary treatment team approach comprised of psychologists, a social worker, peer support specialists, a vocational rehabilitation specialist and a nurse. The groups focus on hope, self-responsibility, education, self-advocacy and support. Veterans receive treatment for a variety of mental health conditions including schizophrenia, schizoaffective disorder, bipolar disorder, major depression, and PTSD. A portion of these Veterans may also present with co-occurring substance use disorders. The PRRC population is multiracial and heterogeneous with ages ranging from early twenties to their late seventies, from homeless Veterans to employed homeowners.

Assessment, Treatment and Supervision

Training in this rotation will focus on developing competency in providing specialty care for Serious Mental Illness in an intensive outpatient setting. Core skills will include conducting structured intake assessment/diagnostic interviews, as well as providing individual and group treatments utilizing evidence-based psychotherapies (EBPs) for the treatment of Serious Mental Illness with an emphasis on maintaining fidelity to the Recovery Model. Staff within the PRRC program utilize various EBPs including: Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT), Cognitive Therapy (CT), Interpersonal Psychotherapy for Depression (IPT-D), CBT-Psychosis, Social Skills Training, Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT), CBT-Substance Use Disorders, Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) among others.

Externs will have the opportunity to conduct brief psychosocial assessments and intake assessment interviews. They will collaborate with veterans to create recovery-oriented and measurement-based treatment plans. Externs will also have the opportunity to develop and lead their own group based on their interests and Veterans' needs. In addition, frequent questions arise as to the accuracy of diagnosis for specific patients. A number of issues complicate the diagnostic picture, including co-morbid substance abuse, overlap with other major mental illness (e.g., mood disorders with psychotic features), and dementia. Thus, the intern will become familiar with the criteria for serious mental illnesses, including schizophrenia-spectrum disorders, bipolar disorder, and major depression, as well as substance use disorders as described in the DSM-5. Externs may have an opportunity to complete a comprehensive integrated psychological assessment though this is not a frequent need within this particular program given that most veterans have had extensive assessments completed prior to being referred to the PRRC. Primary psychological instruments used may include brief structured interviews (such as the SCID, MINI, and CAPS) and objective psychometric measures (the PAI, MMPI-2, NEO-PI-3, and MCMI-IV). Assessment referral questions typically address differential diagnosis for treatment planning.

The extern will carry a clinical caseload 2-4 individual psychotherapy patients in addition to co-leading at least 3 groups. Ideally this will include following several cases from intake to resolution, including assessment, case formulation and a course of time-limited evidence-based psychotherapy.

Externs will have one-two individual, hour-long supervision sessions per week to discuss assessment cases, case conceptualizations, documentation, and individual psychotherapy cases. Additionally, externs will have the opportunity to discuss treatment modalities and to ask questions about professional development during supervision. Supervisors will also provide "on the spot" feedback during groups that the extern co-leads with the supervisor. The extern is always welcome to seek out the supervisor, or other PRRC team members as applicable, with questions and/or concerns between supervision sessions. The general approach to supervision is collaborative, with the goal of supervision to ensure that the extern is getting the training experience that he/she desires.

Dr. Victoria Eyler completed Psy.D. at Loyola University in Maryland. She completed her pre-doctoral internship and post-doctoral residency at St. Elizabeths Hospital in Washington, D.C. specializing in forensic neuropsychology. She has worked for the VA Maryland Health Care System for 19 years in a variety of positions including direct patient care, Program Coordination, and in executive leadership as the Clinical Manager for all Community Mental Health programs, as the Deputy Director of Mental Health, and also as the Mental Health Program Director in the regional VISN 5 office overseeing mental health operations for Washington DCVA, Martinsburg, West Virginia VA and the VA Maryland Health Care System. She is currently the Program Coordinator for the Perry Point PRRC program and the Recovery Center program. She utilizes evidence-based practices including CBT, CBT-Psychosis, Social Cognition Interaction Therapy, Interpersonal Psychotherapy for Depression, and Cognitive Therapy.

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Psychosocial Residential Rehabilitation Treatment Program (PRRTP), Serious Mental Illness – Perry Point VAMC

The Perry Point SMI PRRTP is a 41-bed voluntary residential treatment program with an approximately 75-day length of stay that provides a 24-hour therapeutic setting. The PRRTP utilizes a milieu of peer and professional support with an emphasis on psychosocial rehabilitation and recovery services that focuses on fostering Veteran's recovery goals and living a full, valued life. The Veteran population include men and women between 20-80 years old who come to the program to work on mental health, substance use, and psychosocial needs. Many of the Veterans on the unit present with mental health diagnosis, including Serious Mental Illness. While on the unit, Veterans learn skills to manage the symptoms while increasing their level of independence and community reintegration. The role of the psychologist on the unit includes providing individual and group therapy, patient education, psychological assessments, treatment team meetings, treatment planning.

As an extern on the unit, you will be integrated into the treatment milieu. Externs will provide individual psychotherapy and be a primary-therapist to 1-2 Veterans and will facilitate one group. When available, externs will engage in psychological assessment which could range from brief, focused assessment to broader full psychological evaluations. Assessment opportunities can include providing the Mini Mental Status Exam, PHQ-9, PTSD Checklist for the DSM 5 (PCL-5), Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI-2RF), and Structured Clinical Interviews. Externs will have the opportunity to learn treatment modalities such as: Recovery Oriented Cognitive Therapy for Serious Mental Illness, Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) for Depression, Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) for Depression, CBT for Psychosis, Social Skills Training for Schizophrenia, and Dialectical Behavioral Therapy (DBT). Externs will be onsite for 16 hours/week and will receive at 2 hours of supervision each week. The intern and supervising psychologist will work collaboratively to meet the self-identified goals of the intern during the experience. The methods that may be used in supervision include audiotape, co-therapy, observation, case discussion, and review of completed assessments and reports.

Dr. Christina J. Thai, Ph.D. Dr. Thai completed her Ph.D. at the University of Maryland, College Park, and her predoctoral internship at the South Texas VA Health Care System in San Antonio, Texas. She completed a postdoctoral fellowship in Psychosocial Rehabilitation for Serious Mental Illness at the South Texas VA Health Care System. This role included providing individual and groups psychotherapy, serving as a recovery coordinator, and implementing psychotherapy groups at the Psychosocial Rehabilitation and Recovery Center (PRRC). Her research interests are racial socialization and bystander interventions during racism experiences. Dr. Thai implemented a Race-Based Stress and Trauma Empowerment Group at the PRRC to address Veteran's desire for a safe space to discuss their experiences of racism. Dr. Thai is a staff psychologist at the PRRTP. Her focus is on providing recovery-oriented, Veteran-centered care that supports Veterans in achieving and living a meaningful life.

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Didactic Opportunities

Diversity Seminar Series

The Mental Health Clinical Center offers a monthly diversity seminar, which is focused on topics that enhance extern's understanding of cultural competence within clinical and research applications. Topics are a blend of didactic material and experiential exercises, designed to enhance intra/interpersonal awareness, knowledge, and practical skills. Topics typically include military culture, disabilities, LGBTQI, race and privilege, spirituality, and microaggressions.

The objectives for the diversity seminar are to:

- provide an atmosphere in which externs and supervisors can explore themselves, their worldviews, and the worldviews of others, and how these beliefs might impact clinical work, scientific research, or professional development
- increase externs' awareness and understanding of cultural factors in diagnostic and therapeutic processes, and the research environment
- broaden externs' effectiveness in counseling and researching persons with diverse characteristics

Additional Didactic Opportunities

There may be a number of intensive trainings and consultation groups in evidenced-based treatments that are offered to program externs. These include, but are not limited to: Social Skills Training, Cognitive Processing Therapy, Dialectical Behavior Therapy, Acceptance and Commitment Therapy, and Motivational Interviewing. Most trainings involve a formal workshop that is facilitated by a regional or national trainer which may be followed by a consultation group to assist in implementation of the treatment modality.

The VA Talent Management System offers many other educational opportunities that may be accessed at the VA or at home. Examples include the Advanced Family Topics Seminar, multi-module training for the Clinician Administered Scale for PTSD and Cognitive Processing Therapy, Women's Mental Health, Geriatrics and Extended Care, Military Sexual Trauma webinars.

HOW TO APPLY

Applicant Eligibility

1. Applicants must be trainees in good standing in an APA-accredited doctoral program in clinical, counseling, or school psychology and approved for externship by their graduate program Training Director.
2. Externs must be citizens of the United States and must present documentation of U.S. Citizenship prior to beginning the externship. The VA is unable to consider applications from anyone who is not currently a U.S. citizen. Verification of citizenship is required following selection. All externs must complete a Certification of Citizenship in the United States prior to beginning VA training. Male applicants must have registered for the draft by age 26 to be eligible for any U.S. government employment, including

selection as a paid VA trainee. Male applicants must sign a pre-appointment Certification Statement for Selective Service Registration before they can be processed into a training program. Exceptions can only be granted by the U.S. Office of Personnel Management.

3. Externs are subject to fingerprinting, employee health physical screening, and background checks. Selection decisions are contingent on passing these screens.
4. The VA conducts drug screening on randomly selected personnel. Externs are not required to be tested prior to beginning work, but after beginning a placement, are subject to random selection.
5. Additional requirements for all VA trainees are included at the following link: <https://www.psychologytraining.va.gov/eligibility.asp>. This information will need to be verified by completing a Trainee Qualifications and Credentials Verification Letter (TQCVL) with your Graduate Program Director of Clinical Training at the time of selection.
6. Please review the specific requirements associated with the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic ([COVID-19 Impact on Training](#)) on page 6, which outlines requirements for personal equipment and suitable work environment for virtual clinical work, approval of a training proposal, and documentation of influenza vaccination or exemption.

Application Procedures

1. All applications materials must be submitted electronically to the Psychology Externship Program Coordinator, Dr. Arthur Sandt, at Arthur.Sandt@va.gov. When naming files, please use the following convention: YOUR LAST NAME_NAME OF FILE (e.g., SANDT_VAMHCS Cover Letter). Application materials should include the following:
 - a. A cover letter, **which clearly indicates** the placements for which you would like to be considered. Please detail your specific reasons for choosing the supervisor and/or practicum placement in which you are interested. This is your opportunity to help present yourself favorably to your prospective supervisors and will help them determine whether to offer you an interview. Applicants may copy and paste the checklist provided below in their cover letter and rank order the practicum opportunities listed (i.e., 1, 2, and 3). Please do not rank more than three practicum opportunities and you are not required to rank three placements.

Rank	Name of Placement
1	
2	
3	

- b. An updated curriculum vita.
2. A *letter of readiness* sent directly from the applicant's Director of Clinical Training. This letter should briefly describe your standing in your program, approval from your DCT or program to apply for practicum, and any other salient information your DCT may wish to include that may impact your practicum placement. Please note that *letters of recommendation* are not required.
3. Complete applications will be forwarded to respective Externship Clinical Supervisors for review.
4. Applicants invited for an interview will be contacted directly by the respective Externship Clinical Supervisors.
5. Externship Clinical Supervisors may make an informal offer to applicants. The Externship Coordinator will contact the applicant to make the formal offer.

6. **The deadline for submission of applications is Tuesday, February 1, 2022.** Please note that applications received after this date are not be guaranteed to be reviewed. However, individual supervisors may continue to review applications received after the deadline for any unfilled positions, at their discretion.

Selection Procedures

A separate committee of externship training staff from each track reviews and evaluates each application on the domains of clinical and assessment experience, quality of graduate program, coursework and grades, life experiences, and goodness of fit with the training program. Each program decides which applicants will be invited for interviews in late February and early March. Decisions regarding interviews are communicated via email.

Contact Information

Please visit our Training Program website at:

<https://www.va.gov/maryland-health-care/programs/mental-health-clinical-center-psychology-training-program/>

Requests for additional information about the VAMHCS Psychology Externship Program may be obtained via email (preferred) or telephone from the following individuals:

Primary Contact:

Arthur Sandt, Ph.D.

Psychology Externship Coordinator

410-605-7369

Arthur.Sandt@va.gov

Secondary Contact:

Moira Dux, Ph.D.

Psychology Training Program Director

410-637-1383

Moira.Dux@va.gov